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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



LATVIA IN THE SYSTEM OF EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL SECURITY: A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

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This article focuses on Latvian contribution to European security, which, for the purposes of this study, is understood as a territorial system of regional security. Such system is a combination of interconnected institutions with Latvian participation operating in the field of security, Latvian cooperation with other European countries in the field of security, and the European perception of major security challenges and threats (that Latvia may or may not agree with). A systemic approach to studying the role of Latvia in the territorial system of European security requires a solid theoretical framework. The theories of international relations discussed in this article fall into two categories: those where territorial security systems are viewed as a product of external factors, and those that focus on internal regional factors. In this article, the authors rely on a variety of methods, including those that are characteristic of classical theories of international relations (such as realism and liberalism), and those employed in social constructivism studies. It is concluded that Latvian cooperation with institutions and countries of the territorial system of European security is rather limited, which indicates either a lack of the country's integration into the system or a crisis of the system itself. An important result of the study is the validation of a systemic approach to studying regional security systems. This angle proves particularly useful in identifying crises of territorial systems of regional security in various regions of the world.

Key words: international relations, Latvia, Europe, security, systemic approach, regionalism, territorial systems

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The key issues of the science of international relations are those of war and peace. However, in practice, one

can often observe a misleading use of terms — instead of discussing the issues of war and peace, experts in international relations and almost all agents of international politics talk about security. Peace and security are often considered as synonyms. As a result, research literature mentions ensuring security as a target of international politics more frequently than establishing peace. In the conditions when ensuring security at the global level — except for the issue of strategic disarmament — is rather problematic, experts in international relations and actors of international politics address the problem of regional security. International regions — Europe and Asia, the Middle East and Africa, North and Latin America, as well as smaller regions — are becoming territorial security systems, and this notion is pivotal to this article.

The region as a territorial system is composed of mutually affecting political, economic, and sociocultural elements. Similarly, the region as a territorial security system consists of regional international institutions designed to ensure regional security, facilitate cooperation of the region's countries toward ensuring regional security, and, finally, encourage citizens to assess the key challenges and threats to security. All these components of the regional security system affect each other and thus form the territorial security system in the region. The region of Europe is no exception to the rule: regional security institutions — such as the OSCE and NATO function there, European countries cooperate with each other in ensuring security, and Europeans have a common ideas of key challenges and threats to the continent.

The features of the regional security system's functioning, including its strengths and weaknesses, are most pronounced when considering the position of a certain country in this system. This article presents the results of the analysis of the position of Latvia in the territorial system of European security.

In theoretical terms, the article considers different approaches to the study of international relations — those that focus on the formation of a region under the impact of external factors and those that develop as a result of internal processes in the relations between the region's countries. In practical terms, the position of Latvia in the territorial system of European security is comprehensively analysed from the perspective of these approaches. Latvia's participation in NATO — a military and political alliance that developed under the influence of an external threat — will be analysed from the perspective of the contribution of the country's accession to the alliance to strengthening its military and political cooperation with the immediate neighbours.

The analysis of Latvia's participation in the OSCE will embrace three aspects. Firstly, it's the country's participation in the efforts the organisation took towards conventional arms control in Europe. Secondly, it is Latvia's cooperation with the OSCE in the field of democratisation, namely, in ensuring equal access democratic process for national minorities. Thirdly, it is the perception of this organisation in Latvia. Finally, we will consider the European Union as an element of the territorial system of European security. More than half a century ago, one of the objectives of European integration was to ensure that the events of the second quarter of the 20th century would

never happen again. It was done through voluntary renunciation of part of national sovereignty to supranational institutions. Today, a relevant question is to what degree the aspiration to ensure that the horrors of World War II will never happen again is supported by Latvia's elites and its population as a goal of the European integration project.

Territorial security systems: a view from the outside

The tradition to consider international politics from the perspective of the system approach is closely connected to decolonisation that commenced after World War II. In the late 1980s, O. Young was one of the first to propose considering international politics from the perspective of the global system, on the one hand, and regional subsystems, on the other [1]. This work is to be regarded as ground-breaking merely because it was the first to suppose that the then division of the world according to the imperial principle into the 'British,' 'French,' and other parts would soon lose its significance in the analysis of international politics and the division of the world into regions — Europe and Asia, the Middle East and Africa, North and Latin America — would become increasingly important. This did happen in almost half a century after the publication of O. Young's article. Although it seems premature to speak of the completion of the decolonisation process, the significance of regions for international politics has increased considerably.

The importance of regions as territorial subsystems of international politics increased even more significantly after the end of the Cold War, when the sovereignty crisis affecting countries both in the third world and Europe, gave rise to expectations of state being gradually replaced by world politics actors, including regions, in international politics. If most advocates of this theory associated these expectations with the prospect of new international politics where peaceful cooperation would take precedence over armed conflicts, other researchers expressed concerns over the increase in regions' significance [2]. Although one can state that the expectations of twenty years ago have not been met, they still contributed to an increase in the number of studies into the role of regions in international politics.

F. Tassinari distinguished between four types of regions described in theoretical works on international relations [3]. On the one hand, he identifies regions formed (according to some authors) from the 'inside' and regions formed (according to other authors) from the 'outside'. For instance, classical realism in the international relations theory suggests that regions create a basis for military and political alliances and, thus, are formed from the 'outside' — under the influence of an external threat, which makes the region's countries form a military and political alliance. H. Morgantau wrote that "while the alliances of former periods of history have not disappeared, they tend to become "regional arrangements" within an over-all legal organization" [4, p. 104]. An example of a region serving as the basis for a military and political alliance is the North Atlantic region.

On the other hand, F. Tassinari distinguished between theories that claim that regions are formed top-down under the influence of regional institutions

from those insisting that regions are formed ‘from below’ under the impact of ideas of people living in these regions and as well as those having no immediate relation to it. Institutions and ideas affect each other: institutes being an integral element of socialisation processes affect the formation of ideas. However, ideas also affect institutions and a change in dominant ideas can trigger a change in institutions. Whereas classical realism claims that regions are formed from the ‘outside’ and top-down, a good example of a theory suggesting that regions are formed from the ‘outside’ but ‘from below’ is that proposed by D. Lanko who has introduced the concept of *the regional approach* — a type of double standards when discriminatory practices are used against countries affiliated with a certain region in the minds of people adhering to double standards [5].

Territorial security systems: a view from the inside

A threat that makes a group of countries create a regional military and political alliance, as well as the actors applying double standards to a certain group of countries are factors that are external to these groups of countries and facilitate regionalisation within these groups. Other theories of international relations consider regionalisation as a process that takes place from the ‘inside’ either under the influence of regional cooperation institutions, i.e. top-down, or under the influence of ideas of people living in the region, i.e. ‘from below’. Regionalisation from the ‘inside’ is discussed by G.M. Fedorov in the context of ‘territorial systems’ [6]. He identifies different types of regions by their position in a certain hierarchy — from the global to the local level — and by their functional type — political, economic, and sociocultural regions. According to this classification, the region of Europe examined in this study represents a megaregion.

The region of Europe should be considered a political, economic, and sociocultural region. Numerous European cooperation institutions make it possible to speak of Europe as a political region. The Europeans’ perception of Europe as a uniform region makes it possible to consider it a sociocultural region. Moreover, these institutions and perceptions affect each other. Economic cooperation in Europe, on the one hand, contributes to the strengthening of regional political institutions. On the other hand, the idea of Europe as a uniform region isolates Europe from the rest of the world. D. Mitrany warned of such isolation when he wrote that “continental unions would have a better chance than individual states to practise the autarky that makes for division” [7, p. 27]. Such self-isolation of a group of EU states is being observed today, when the process of EU enlargement has come to a virtual standstill being replaced by the emergence of new division lines in Europe.

The European cooperation institutions — not only those of the EU — as well as the high level of European economic cooperation contribute to the idea of Europe as a uniform region. This idea, in its turn, stimulates the intensification of political and economic cooperation in the region. Social constructivism in the international relations theory brings these ideas and their role in the regionalisation process to the foreground. This thesis is presented

most vividly in the work of B. Buzan and O. Wæver introducing the concept of a *regional security complex* [8]. Such complex is understood as a region, whose residents have similar ideas of the major challenges to their security. In particular, in Europe, the possibility that the atrocities of World War II can happen again is perceived as a key challenge to regional security. European integration is a project aimed to minimise the probability of such scenario through European states renouncing part of their sovereignty.

The study into the position of Latvia in the territorial system of European security undertaken in this article is comprehensive in its character. It takes into account different theoretical approaches to the formation of regions as territorial security systems. Firstly, we will consider the position of Latvia in NATO — a military and political alliance bringing together almost half of today's European states. We will focus on Latvia's cooperation with the neighbouring alliance members, first of all, Lithuania and Estonia in the framework of NATO. Further, we will analyse Latvia's cooperation with the OSCE — a tool of European security bringing together most European countries. Finally, the European Union will be analysed as an element of the European territorial security system with an emphasis on the degree to which Latvia's population shares the above ideas about key threats to European security.

Latvia's military and political cooperation with Lithuania and Estonia prior to and after NATO accession

Immediately after Latvia's declaration of independence, it was discussed whether the country should become neutral akin to neighbouring Sweden and Finland or pursue an individual defence policy based on the objective of NATO accession. However, after 1995, the succeeding governments worked towards acceding to the alliance. However, Latvia expressed distrust of NATO and vice versa. As Ž. Ozoliņa stresses, Lithuanian elites were not sure that the countries of the West — even after NATO accession — would protect the country at any cost in case of aggression from a third party [9, p. 117]. At the same time, Latvia's Russian-speaking population was concerned with the prospect of deterioration of the already complicated Latvian-Russian relations after the country's accession to NATO. These concerns resulted in the fact that on February 26, 2004, only 77 out of 100 Saeima members voted for NATO accession [10].

Negative votes were cast by the representatives of the Socialist Party of Latvia, which had broad support among the Russian-speaking population. The party 'For Human Rights in United Latvia' abstained. All members of the parties enjoying the support of ethnic Latvians voted for NATO accession. Thus, if in the 1990s, they had doubts about NATO accession, these doubts vanished in 2004. In its turn, NATO had certain doubts about Latvia's accession too: the alliance's leadership was not sure that the country would ensure the necessary level of international cooperation both in the preparation for accession and after it is completed. Military projects of the three Baltic States had to demonstrate the readiness of Latvia (as well as Estonia and Lithuania) for military and political cooperation.

BALTBAT — the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion staffed by citizens of the Baltics, which participated in the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina — was formed as early as 1994. According to R. Sapronas, the establishment of the battalion did not only demonstrate the three Baltic States' commitment to cooperation but also contributed to the formation of armed forces in these countries. Therefore, after the demise of the USSR and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, they did not have to create armed forces 'from scratch' [11]. The year 1996 saw the launch of the BALTNET project which suggested the development of a joint system of monitoring the airspace of the three Baltic States. In 1997, the BALTRON project was launched to improve cooperation between the Baltic States in rescue missions in the Baltic Sea. Finally, in 1997, the Baltic Defence College was founded to train officers for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

The College was located in Estonia, the coordination council of BALTNET in Lithuania, and the BALTNET base and BALTRON coordination council in Latvia. These military projects made it possible for the Baltics, including Latvia, to prove their commitment to cooperation, which resulted in their accession to the alliance in 2004. It seemed that the military and political cooperation between the three Baltic States had to reach an entirely new level. However, in practice, their cooperation became less intense [12]. Even before the Baltics' formal accession to NATO, BALTBAT was disbanded. Moreover, the experience in coordinating the members of these countries' armed forces gained prior to NATO accession was not required later. For instance, in the course of NATO's operation in Afghanistan, Lithuania headed its own Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), whereas Latvia and Estonia refused to enter Lithuania's team joining instead the Dutch PRT.

A reduction in the level of military and political cooperation of the Baltic States after NATO accession can be explained by the growing competition between the three countries for housing military bases of the Western NATO partners. On the one hand, a military base builds a feeling of safety in the local population. However, some people will have the opposite feeling: in case of an armed conflict, these bases will be attacked first thus becoming a threat to civilians living in its vicinity. On the other hand, Latvia's Western NATO partners are ready to pay well for renting the bases, which can contribute to balancing Latvia's budget. It is not a coincidence that the possibility of creating new bases in Latvia was one of the most discussed topics in the country during the NATO summit of September 4—5, 2014 [13].

Latvia and the OSCE: problems of conventional arms and minority rights

After the Cold War, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe became the cornerstone of the political dimension of European territorial security system. The OSCE gained this status due to its universality — it was an organisation that did not divide the European countries in the East and West as NATO did and its only demand for prospective members was commitment to peace and cooperation on the continent. As a result, 57 coun-

tries have joined the organisation, including not only most European countries, but also Eurasian countries — Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as North American — Canada and the USA. In September 1991, right after the failure of the Soviet Coup, the Baltic States also became members of the OSCE. In the 1990s, the organisation focused on conventional arms control in the member states, as well as control over the observance of democratic procedures, including equal participation of national minorities in the democratic political process.

Latvia and the other Baltic States did not play a remarkable role in conventional arms control in Europe. On the one hand, these states aimed to accede to NATO and thus change the balance of forces on the continent in favour of the alliance. On the other hand, they did not only refrain from ratifying but also did not sign the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 1999. Therefore, in case NATO exceeded its conventional arms quota, these weapons could be deployed in Latvia and the other Baltic States, which gave rise to concerns in Russia. On the verge of NATO enlargement, the alliance countries still tried to find a compromise: for instance, in 2003, it was promised that, after NATO accession, the Baltic States would join the agreement [14]. However, these promises were soon forgotten. As a result, the Agreement was ratified by four countries and did not enter into force.

In Latvia — moreover, among the Latvian elites represented mainly by ethnic Latvians — there is an ambivalent attitude to the OSCE. When Latvia's position coincides with that of the organisation, the OSCE is considered pro-Western and its efficiency is assessed from the perspective of its contribution to the dialogue between the pro-Western 'majority' (in the Latvian terminology) of the OSCE member states and Russia [15, p. 41]. In other cases, when the OSCE criticises Latvia, the organisation is considered pro-Russian. The OSCE was often dubbed pro-Russian in the 1990s, when the organisation sharply criticised the status of the Latvian Russian-speaking community, whose representatives were often (and some of them still are) deprived of the right to vote. Unlike NATO, where "the observance of human rights is fully subordinate to the political and economic interests of the USA and its allies" [16], the OSCE has given priority to human rights observation both during and after the Cold War. In 1993–2001, an OSCE mission was operating in Latvia (as well as in Estonia) to monitor the process of integration of the Russian-speaking population into the country's political space.

In the 1990s, the OSCE's criticism of Latvia was sharper than that of Estonia. It is worth mentioning the title of an article published by an Estonian right-wing radical politician M. Nutt ("If Latvia breaks, they will come to Estonia") [17]. The activities of the OSCE mission in Latvia were perceived as a result of Russia's aspirations to prevent Latvia from acceding to NATO and the EU, whereas the closing down of the mission in 2001 — despite Russia's objections — was interpreted as an important step on the way to these organisations. However, after the country's accession to NATO and the EU, the OSCE was still perceived in Latvia as a pro-Russian organisa-

tion, particularly when it criticised Latvia for a lack of will to fully integrate the Russian-speaking population. For instance, in 2013, the expert of the Latvian Centre for East European Policy Studies, M. Cepurītis condemned the OSCE of pro-Russian orientation for merely hearing out the representatives of Latvia's Russian-speaking population [18].

Latvia in the sociocultural system of the European Union: common values and common threats

The idea that the European Union is based not only on cooperation between the member states, but also on common values, i.e. it is a sociocultural systems (in G.M. Fedora's terminology), is rather widespread. It is assumed that common EU values include the Western European interpretation of the value of human rights. However, the EU institutions have developed a relatively small number of documents establishing standards in human rights observance. Therefore, when the EU has to identify to which extent a certain state meets these standards, it uses the assessments given by the OSCE and the Council of Europe. It was this way that the EU decided in the 1990s whether Latvia met the standards of human rights observation to a degree sufficient for an EU candidate [19].

The problem of cooperation between Latvia and the OSCE in the field of national minorities' rights was described above. However, it is important to pay attention to the issue of Latvia's cooperation with the Council of Europe. In this context, Latvia is a special case among the Baltic States. Unlike Estonia and Lithuania, which became full members of the Council of Europe as early as 1993, Latvia's way to this organisation was more complicated. Lithuania gave citizenship to all residents of the republic who permanently lived in Lithuania during the collapse of the USSR. Although Estonia did not give citizenship to those who moved to the republic after 1940, it granted those persons the status of an alien, which is clearly defined in international law. This was also sufficient for the Council of Europe. Latvia did not grant citizenship to the residents of the republic who moved there after 1940. However, these people were granted the status of 'non-citizen,' which is not defined in international law and thus creates ample opportunity for violating the rights of such people.

Only after Latvia had adopted a new Law on Citizenship, which described in detail the procedure of acquiring citizenship, in 1994, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe made a decision to make Latvia a full member of the organisation [20]. The European Union needed five more years to pronounce Latvia a country meeting the human rights observance standards. In 1997, the European Council concluded in Luxembourg that the EU is ready to enter into accession negotiations with Estonia, but not Lithuania and Latvia [21]. If, in the case of Lithuania, the reason for rejection was the insufficient level of economic development, then in the case of Latvia, the only reason was minority rights. Only two years later, the European Council concluded in Helsinki that the EU is ready to start accession negotiations with Latvia [22].

It is very telling that the European Union agreed to enter accession negotiations with Latvia two years later than with Estonia, and it took Latvia two years longer than Estonia to join the Council of Europe. It is also very revealing that the accession of Latvia to the EU took place only in 2004, i.e. after the OSCE had pronounced the human rights situation in Latvia satisfactory and the OSCE mission's mandate had expired. After Latvia's accession to the EU, the problems with minority human rights persisted. It has led to objective criticism by Russia on a number of occasions. Similarly, Russia has criticised the attempts to heroize Nazism in Latvia. In this context, one should mention a monument in the Latvian town of Babushka to the town's 'defenders' who interdicted the liberation of Latvia from the Nazi in 1944. It provoked a discussion not only in Russia and among Latvia's Russian-speaking population, but also among ethnic Latvians [23].

The possibility that World War II could happen again as a key threat to European security was mentioned above as a common concern, which once brought together the Western European countries of the European Union, as the authors of the regional security complexes theory believe. Wary of the possibility of history repeating itself, the Western European countries renounced a significant part of their sovereignty to supranational institutions of European integration. It seems that, in practice, most of Latvian population does not share Western European ideas of World War II. Moreover, for most residents of Latvia, national sovereignty is a more cherished value than European integration. According to a 2012 survey, 56% of the country's residents supported sovereignty and opposed the idea of deeper European integration [24]. Therefore, Latvia's integration into the sociocultural territorial system of the European Union cannot be considered completed.

Conclusion

The major political elements of the European territorial security system, which also include Latvia, are the OSCE, NATO, and the European Union. However, the level of Latvia's cooperation with other countries in the framework of these institutions and with the institutions themselves is far from being perfect. For instance, Latvia's cooperation with the neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania has slowed down after the countries' accession to NATO. Although the OSCE has not expressed sharp criticism as to the participation of Latvia's Russian-speaking population in the democratic political process, mere attempts to assess the situation in this field are opposed by the Latvian elite, which is represented mostly by ethnic Latvians. State sovereignty remains a cherished value for Latvians and the ideas of renouncing part of sovereignty to the EU institutions to establish peace in Europe are not shared by most of the country's population.

This can be indicative of the fact that Latvia is a relatively 'young' member of the European territorial security system. Although the country has been a full member of the OSCE since 1991 and NATO and the EU since 2004, its elites and population are still a far cry from full integration into the European territorial security system, especially, in sociocultural

terms. However, it can also be indicative of that the European territorial security system is undergoing a painful process of transformation, one of the causes of which is Latvia's participation in it. When this transformation period is completed, the European territorial security system will no longer be the same. The mechanism of the new systems can be uncovered using the system approach, i.e. the approach to analysing European security, which is understood as a territorial system formed by mutually affecting components such as institutions, international cooperation, and the perception of key threats and challenges.

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